Claims

The claims are listed as follows:

1.   (Original) A computer-implemented method comprising:

storing data about a plurality of member entities that have a relationship with a group

entity;

associating a state variable with each member entity;

automatically updating the state variable of each member entity with one of a group of

predefined, first states, in response to applying one of a set of predefined, rules to analyze some

of the stored data, wherein the set of rules are defined in part by the group entity; and

automatically determining whether or not online content is to be delivered to each

member entity based on the state variable of the member entity.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the stored data includes data that has been

derived from online interaction between each member entity and the group entity.

3.   (Original) An article of manufacture having a machine-accessible medium with data

stored therein that, when accessed by a machine, associates a state variable with each of a

plurality of member entities that have a relationship with a group entity, automatically updates

the state variable of each member entity with one of a group of predefined states in response to

applying one of a set of predefined rules to analyze some of stored data that is about the plurality

of member entities, wherein the set of rules are defined in part by the group entity, and

automatically determines whether or not online content is to be delivered to each member entity

based on the state variable of the member entity.

4.   (Original) A computer-implemented method comprising:

storing data about a plurality of member entities that have a relationship with a group entity;

associating a state variable with each member entity; automatically updating the state variable of each member entity with one of a group of predefined, first states, in response to applying one of a set of predefined, rules to analyze some of the stored data, wherein the set of rules are defined in part by the group entity; and

automatically personalizing online content that is to be delivered to each member entity, wherein the state variable determines in part how the online content for the member entity is personalized.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the stored data includes data that has been derived from online communications between each member entity and the group entity.

6.   (Original) An article of manufacture having a machine-accessible medium with data stored therein that, when accessed by a machine, associates a state variable with each of a plurality of member entities that have a relationship with a group entity, automatically updates the state variable of each member entity with one of a group of predefined states in response to applying one of a set of predefined rules to analyze some of stored data that is about the plurality of member entities, wherein the set of rules are defined in part by the group entity, and automatically personalizes online content that is to be delivered to each member entity, wherein the state variable determines in part how the online content for the member entity is personalized.

7-31. (Cancelled)

32.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the group of predefined, first states includes the following three states: 1) a customer who is less than ~~two weeks~~ <u>a predetermined period of time</u> old; 2) a customer who is at least ~~two weeks~~ <u>the predetermined period of time</u> old and has purchased a product or used a service of the merchant; and 3) a customer who is at least ~~two weeks~~ <u>the predetermined period of time</u> old and has not used the service.

33.   (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture of claim 3, wherein the states include new customer status, whether a new customer has not used a service within a predetermined period of time, and whether the new customer is likely to subscribe to certain additional services.

34.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the first states include new customer status, whether a new customer has not used a service within a predetermined period of time, and whether the new customer is likely to subscribe to certain additional services.

35.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the data relates to one of native data and arbitrary data, the native data being inherently understandable as relating to the customers, the arbitrary data being information imported into the system.

36.   (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture of claim 3, wherein the data relates to one of native data and arbitrary data, the native data being inherently understandable as relating to the customers, the arbitrary data being information imported into the system.

37.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the data relates to one of native data and arbitrary data, the native data being inherently understandable as relating to the customers, the arbitrary data being information imported into the system.

38.   (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the group entity is a merchant that has an online presence offering services, wherein the plurality of member entities are customers that have a relationship with the merchant, wherein the stored data includes data of the customers' behavior, characteristics, or both, wherein the state variable of a customer is automatically transitioned from one value to another, as time passes and data about the customer's usage of the merchant's services continues to be collected, in response to applying the set of predefined rules to analyze some of the stored data, and wherein the online content is E-mail.

39.   (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the state variable has an initial value of "New."

40.   (New) The article of manufacture of claim 3, wherein the group entity is a merchant that has an online presence offering services, wherein the plurality of member entities are customers that have a relationship with the merchant, wherein the stored data includes data of the customers' behavior, characteristics, or both, wherein the state variable of a customer is automatically transitioned from one value to another, as time passes and data about the customer's usage of the merchant's services continues to be collected, in response to applying the set of predefined rules to analyze some of the stored data.

41.   (New) The method of claim 40, wherein the state variable has an initial value of "New."

42.   (New) The method of claim 4, wherein the group entity is a merchant that has an online presence offering services, wherein the plurality of member entities are customers that have a relationship with the merchant, wherein the stored data includes data of the customers' behavior, characteristics, or both, wherein the state variable of a customer is automatically transitioned from one value to another, as time passes and data about the customer's usage of the merchant's services continues to be collected, in response to applying the set of predefined rules to analyze some of the stored data.

43.   (New) The method of claim 42, wherein the state variable has an initial value of "New."

44.   (New) The article of manufacture of claim 6, wherein the group entity is a merchant that has an online presence offering services, wherein the plurality of member entities are customers that have a relationship with the merchant, wherein the stored data includes data of the customers' behavior, characteristics, or both, wherein the state variable of a customer is automatically transitioned from one value to another as time passes, and data about the customer's usage of the merchant's services continues to be collected, in response to applying the set of predefined rules to analyze some of the stored data.

45.   (New) The method of claim 44, wherein the state variable has an initial value of "New."